

**Washington, DC** - This afternoon the House voted 409-2 to pass HR 2642, the 2008 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act. By increasing the Veterans Administration budget by \$6.7 billion, this bill provides for the largest single budget increase in the history of the VA, highlighting Congress's commitment to honoring our service men and women. The bill also displays a strong pledge to strengthening our military by providing better facilities, resources to grow our forces, and fully funding the 2005 base realignment and closure process (BRAC) at \$8.2 billion.

Congressman Charles Gonzalez (TX-20) issued the following statement applauding the passage of the bill:

"Congress is backing up our rhetoric with action when it comes to displaying strong support for our troops. This bill's historic investment in resources for our servicemen women and our nation's veterans is indispensable as we honor our promises to those who have served," said Rep. Gonzalez. "I'm proud that this legislation provides for historic increases in healthcare benefits for our veterans and also reflects a strong commitment to strengthening our military which is currently stretched too thin."

"By appropriating funds for new facilities and by fully funding the base realignment and closure (BRAC) recommendations, we're ensuring that the men and women in our military have access to the best available resources while they're serving and after their service has concluded. Congress is honoring its promise to our soldiers and veterans, and this bill's passage symbolizes a truly great day for the military community in San Antonio and across the nation," he added.

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